# RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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23 December 2005

**IND100885.E**

India: Whether POLNET is in operation; if so, whether immigration authorities consult POLNET when processing Indian citizens leaving India and whether a citizen would be refused exit if listed on POLNET; circumstances under which a "no emigration check required" notice would appear on a passport (2003 - 2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

A satellite-based police communication network known as POLNET (*Hindustan Times* 10 May 2005; *The Statesman* 19 Dec. 2004) that enables data, voice and fax exchanges between police and other law enforcement agencies across the country (*Hindustan Times* 10 May 2005; *Times of India* 23 Nov. 2003) was to be implemented in two phases (*The Statesman* 19 Dec. 2004). The first phase would involve linking district police headquarters with their respective state police headquarters via Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT) (*Hindustan Times* 10 May 2005; *The Statesman* 19 Dec. 2004) while during the second phase, police stations countrywide would be linked by Multi Access Radio Telephone (MART), a "wireless telephone system" (ibid.) that Bhatal Electronics, the organization responsible for establishing POLNET throughout India (*Times of India* 23 Apr. 2003; BEL n.d.), calls Multi Access Radio Terminal (ibid.). POLNET was designed to give law enforcement personnel throughout India access to the same data on wanted persons and criminals (Direcway Mar. 2003), including photographs and fingerprints (ibid.; see also *Hindustan Times* 7 July 2004; *Tribune* 19 Nov. 2005), on a highly secure network (*The Statesman* 19 Dec. 2004; *Tribune* 18 Nov. 2005). *The Statesman* reported on 19 December 2004 that the first phase of implementing POLNET was to be completed by the end of 2004 and the second phase by the end of February 2005.

However, in November 2005, the *Tribune* reported that POLNET was in the process of being set up in Himachal Pradesh, while a superintendent of police there stated that the system would not be operational until early 2006 (*Tribune* 19 Nov. 2005). Meanwhile, the police of the province of Assam announced in July 2005 that it had completed installation of VSATs in the first phase, and that the MART system would subsequently be implemented to connect police stations (*Hindustan Times* 19 July 2005). In May 2005, police in Haryana were "tak [ing] a lead" in implementing the first phase of POLNET (*Hindustan Times* 10 May 2005). According to *The Statesman*, in December 2004 West Bengal was the first province to receive the go-ahead to implement POLNET (19 Dec. 2004). However, *Hindustan Times* reported that the provinces of Chandigarh, Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh would take part in the first phase of implementing POLNET beginning in July 2004, though it did not indicate when the first phase would be completed or when the remaining provinces would be included in the implementation of the network (7 July 2004). Further information on the status of the implementation of POLNET could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Besides state and district police headquarters and police stations, other organizations that would be connected through POLNET are the Central Paramilitary Forces (*Direcway* Mar. 2003, *Hindustan Times* 10 May 2005, *Times of India* 23 Nov. 2003), which include the Border Security Force (BSF), the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and Assam Rifles (AR) (*Direcway* Mar. 2003; see also *The Statesman* 19 Dec. 2004); the National Crime Records Bureau (*Hindustan Times* 10 May 2005; *Times of India* 23 Nov. 2003); and the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi (*Direcway* Mar. 2003; *Hindustan Times* 10 May 2005). A newsletter put out by Direcway Entreprise Services, which produces VSATs, reported that 1,100 prisons throughout India would also have access to POLNET (*Direcway* Mar. 2003) while *The Times of India* listed Interpol among organizations that would be linked via POLNET (23 Nov. 2003). Information on whether immigration officials would be able to access POLNET could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Regarding the notice "No emigration check required" that appears on a passport, an official with the High Commission of India in Ottawa indicated, without elaborating, that Indian immigration authorities would place that line in a passport if they deemed that no internal check on the passport holder (such as to verify that the person going abroad to work had sufficient funds) was necessary (21 Dec. 2005). Further information on the notice could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

## References

Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). N.d. "Police Communications Network." <http://www.bel-india.com/Website/StaticAsp/prod_systems1.htm> [Accessed 15 Dec. 2005]

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*Tribune.* 19 November 2005. Vibhor Mohan. "Polnet to Make Crime Probe Easy." <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2005/20051119/himachal.htm#1> [Accessed 1 Dec. 2005]

## Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International, European Country of Origin Information Network, Federation of American Scientists, *Frontline*, Indian Space Research Organisation, Intel, Interpol, National Crime Records Bureau (India), United Kingdom Immigration and Nationality Directorate (Home Office), United States Department of State.